

NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
318 South Sixth Street
Springfield, IL 62701
Tel: 217/492-4450

RODGER A. HEATON
U.S. ATTORNEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS



For Immediate Release
August 3, 2006

Contact: Timothy A. Bass
Assistant U.S. Attorney
(217) 373-5875

Chicago Area Woman Charged with Lying during Federal Investigation

Springfield, IL - The United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, Rodger A. Heaton, announced that a federal grand jury returned an indictment today charging Abena Whisenton, age 34, of Harvey, Illinois, with lying to federal agents.

According to the indictment, in January 2006, federal and state law enforcement agents organized a joint investigation into various armed robberies that had occurred in and around the Kankakee, Illinois area from November 2005 to January 2006. The indictment alleges that Whisenton contacted law enforcement officers on or about January 23, 2006, and represented that she had information concerning the January 19, 2006 armed robbery of the Acme Credit Union in Riverdale, Illinois.

Based on information Whisenton provided, agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation agreed that Whisenton would act as a paid confidential informant to attempt to obtain further information in the robbery investigation. Agents also provided her with a recording device. On January 27, 2006, during a meeting with FBI and other law enforcement agents, Whisenton allegedly falsely represented that she had engaged in a recorded conversation with an individual she identified as being involved in the robberies. The indictment alleges Whisenton staged the entire incident by enlisting a male friend to create a false recorded conversation to receive payment for her cooperation. Based on the alleged false information Whisenton provided, agents made investigative decisions to the detriment of the ongoing armed robbery investigation and paid Whisenton more than \$2,000 as compensation for acting as a confidential informant.

U.S. Attorney Heaton stated, "Resources to investigate crimes are limited. Anyone who takes actions that dishonestly seek to derail an investigation or to personally benefit from it, should expect to be charged for that obstructive conduct."

If convicted of making a false statement to federal law enforcement agents, Whisenton faces up to five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Kankakee Police Department; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Rantoul Police Department; Champaign County Sheriff's Department; and the Illinois State Police. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy A. Bass.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

###